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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 37th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. PETRESKI (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 96: ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (continued)

(a) IMPLEMENTATION OF DECISIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT (continued)

Draft resolution on a special session for the purpose of an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of Agenda 21 (A/C.2/50/L.23)

1. Mr. CABACTULAN (Philippines), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the international community believed in the need to convene a special session to take stock of progress made since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. In the draft text, the Commission on Sustainable Development was invited to convene its Ad Hoc Inter-Sessional Working Group in 1997 in order to prepare its contribution to that special session. All other relevant bodies, in particular the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), were invited to participate. He drew attention to the decision to establish a voluntary fund to assist the least developed countries in participating fully and effectively in the special session.

AGENDA ITEM 97: OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT (continued)

(b) ECONOMIC AND TECHNICAL COOPERATION AMONG DEVELOPING COUNTRIES (continued)

Draft resolution on economic and technical cooperation among developing countries and a United Nations conference on South-South cooperation (A/C.2/50/L.24)

2. Mr. CABACTULAN (Philippines), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, said that the developing countries attached very high importance to South-South cooperation as a dimension of international development cooperation, and therefore felt that the convening of a conference on such cooperation should receive wide support. The draft resolution under consideration also requested the United Nations Development Programme to establish a trust fund for the promotion of South-South cooperation.

Draft resolution on cooperation between the United Nations and the Southern African Development Community (A/C.2/50/L.16)

3. Mr. MPHATHI (Botswana), speaking on behalf of the States members of the Southern African Development Community, said that the region had recently undergone major political changes, with the emergence of Mozambique and Angola from conflict situations and the inclusion of South Africa, Malawi, Mozambique and Tanzania on the list of countries with democratically elected Governments. Draft resolution A/C.2/50/L.16 reflected the new challenges facing the region in its efforts to consolidate peace, promote good governance and ensure regional integration. The text contained an invitation to partners and donor countries

to participate in the forthcoming Annual Consultative Conference of the Southern African Development Community.

AGENDA ITEM 95: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION (continued)

(d) SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY FOR DEVELOPMENT (continued)

(f) WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT (continued) (A/50/399)

(g) HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT (continued) (A/50/330 and Corr.1)

(h) BUSINESS AND DEVELOPMENT (continued) (A/50/417)

(i) INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION FOR THE ERADICATION OF POVERTY IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES (continued) (A/50/215-S/1995/475, A/50/396, A/50/551)

(j) UNITED NATIONS INITIATIVE ON OPPORTUNITY AND PARTICIPATION (continued) (A/50/501)

(k) FOOD AND SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT (continued) (A/C.2/50/8)

Draft resolution on science and technology for development (A/C.2/50/L.25)

4. Mr. CABACTULAN (Philippines), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the draft resolution reaffirmed the continuing validity of the Vienna Programme of Action on Science and Technology for Development. The developing countries attached great importance to science and technology as a means to accelerate sustainable growth and development. The draft resolution highlighted chapter 34 of Agenda 21, in particular the effective access to and transfer of publicly owned technology to developing countries on concessional and preferential terms. It also called on the Commission on Science and Technology for Development and the Commission on Sustainable Development to interact effectively through the Economic and Social Council, and recognized the importance of cooperation among developing countries in the field of science and technology.

5. The CHAIRMAN invited the Committee to resume its general discussion of the cluster of sub-items (f), (g), (h), (i), (j) and (k) under agenda item 95.

6. Miss DURRANT (Jamaica), speaking on behalf of the States members of the Caribbean Community who were Members of the United Nations, said that her delegation appreciated the report of the Secretary-General on developing human resources for development (A/50/330) and concurred with the view that strategic planning in human resources policy should encompass all relevant sectors and include close articulation with the macroeconomic context, especially where financial resources were scarce. The Caribbean Community recognized the significance of operational activities in human resource development, which the regional commissions had stressed in their work. Financial commitment to human resource development was also of considerable importance as a contribution to sustained, people-centred development.

7. A strategy of sustainable development must have as its ultimate goal the development of the human being and should be aimed at raising the quality of life of all sectors in society, especially the poor and disadvantaged. In that context, the Programme of Action for Small Island Developing States was particularly relevant. Special attention must be paid to population issues, education and training and health. As a result of the Barbados Conference, the Caribbean Community was placing greater emphasis on human resource development and national capacity-building.

8. A critical aspect of the development process was the effective mobilization and integration of women. Their contribution should be considered from the point of view of resource generation, enhancement of productivity and greater participation in the decision-making process. The effective integration of women was essential for the attainment of the objectives of the recent global conferences.

9. Many Governments in the Caribbean Community were reviewing their social development strategies, policies and instruments. While they were committed to taking any action their limited resources allowed in order to mitigate the negative social effects of structural adjustment, their efforts must be enhanced with appropriate support from the international community.

10. Given the limited natural and financial resources of members of the Caribbean Community, they had identified their people as their main resource. They recognized the importance of adopting practical approaches to human resource development. One strategy pursued by their Governments was integration, by pooling resources and maximizing capabilities. For example, many institutions of higher education, such as the University of the West Indies, were organized on a regional basis.

11. The Caribbean Community called for careful recognition of the complexities of each nation's own socio-economic, cultural and political environment when providing guidance in implementing human resource development strategies, continuous assessment of training, and improved monitoring and inter-agency cooperation and coordination.

12. Mr. TANASESCU (Romania) said that his delegation shared the view that entrepreneurship was a crucial component of a decentralized, market-based approach to an efficient economy. Privatization was providing a chance for economic recovery by stimulating initiative, improving the quality of management decisions, strengthening incentives and discipline, enhancing efficiency of resource utilization and increasing savings and investment. The Romanian Government saw the main goal of privatization as the establishment of stronger and more dynamic companies with increased capacity to adapt to the domestic and international economic environment.

13. The changes which had taken place in the Romanian economy over the past two years had confirmed that view. Privatization also offered the possibility of accelerating economic and social reform and for consolidating the democratization process. When the economy was decentralized all spheres of society followed suit. Romania had chosen to pursue privatization at a slower pace than some other countries because of the high social costs of rapid

transition. After successfully stimulating economic activity, controlling inflation and the budgetary deficit, the Government was now attempting to accelerate privatization.

14. A basic institution of the market economy and the privatization programme, the Romanian stock exchange had recently been reopened after 50 years. His Government expressed its gratitude to those countries and international financial institutions which had offered consistent support in promoting privatization and creating its legal and institutional framework.

15. Constraints on privatization included a lack of domestic private capital, the scant inflow of foreign direct investment, and the limitations of the institutional framework. Although more difficult to quantify, the social and psychological component of privatization must be taken into account. It would be necessary to create a mentality of entrepreneurship and to build managerial capacity.

16. As a result of privatization, small and medium-sized businesses would begin to dominate economic activity. Management training would be crucial, not only to the success of privatization but also to greater efficiency. His delegation commended the efforts of the specialized agencies, especially UNDP, to develop the capacity of small and medium-sized businesses to participate in a market economy.

17. Mr. ELTAHIR (Sudan) said his country accorded particular importance to the development of women's capacities and the strengthening of their effective role in development through education, improved health conditions, the provision of adequate work opportunities, the eradication of illiteracy among women and the provision of adequate housing for all families.

18. A Coordinating Council for Productive Families had been created to provide families with the means of production, conduct feasibility studies for projects submitted by them and market their products. Indeed, the Sudan considered the "productive families" concept as the most suitable approach to solving the problem of poverty in the world.

19. Women in the Sudan had full rights at the various levels of education. The number of women at the university level had reached 60 per cent of the enrolment in Sudanese universities, thus surpassing the male enrolment.

20. In the area of public service the number of women in certain units and ministries exceeded 50 per cent. Sudanese women had assumed high administrative and political posts, including those of provincial governor and judge of the supreme court, and some ministerial posts in both the federal and state governments were currently occupied by women. Moreover, the Sudanese delegation to the Fourth World Conference on Women had included 170 women.

21. The strengthened role and effectiveness of women, together with improved health conditions, had fostered considerable development gains in both urban and rural areas.

22. There was an urgent need for effective international cooperation with a view to achieving development, eradicating poverty and improving the environment - areas to which a substantial share had been accorded in the Sudan's overall national strategy for the 1990s. Furthermore, the Sudan had established numerous funds earmarked primarily for projects to eliminate poverty and achieve economic and social balance.

23. The Sudan had always attributed great importance to agriculture as the mainstay of food self-sufficiency and had been highly successful in that area, at times even exporting agricultural produce, in addition to its continued provision of food to Operation Lifeline Sudan, an undertaking commended by the international community. The Sudan, given its geographical and human resources, could be the bread-basket of the world, were it not for the fact that for a number of years it had been unfairly denied support for development. If the international community was truly bent on achieving development, eradicating poverty and developing human capacities, it might be better not to tie development support for developing countries to the political stances of certain countries and their organizations, thus creating conditions that hindered the realization of those objectives.

24. Ms. GRAYSON (World Bank) said that compelling evidence indicated that in order to achieve further progress in providing basic needs for all, it was crucial to stimulate economic growth and simultaneously invest heavily in human capital through improvements in education, health, nutrition and other social services. That would set in motion a "virtuous circle" of mutually reinforcing benefits and break the circle of binding poverty. Because of the strong interrelationship among these benefits, the World Bank's lending for the social sector had steadily increased. In fact, the Bank was currently the largest single source of external finance for education, health and nutrition.

25. With respect to women in development, she noted that improving women's productivity contributed to growth, efficiency and poverty reduction. Investing proportionally more in women than in men was thus an important part of development strategy, as well as an act of social justice. Pursuant to the commitment it had made at the Fourth World Conference on Women, the World Bank planned to allocate about $900 million a year in lending to girls' education at both the primary and secondary levels. The Bank was also working with its partners towards meeting the targets it had proposed for the year 2010, namely, that all girls would complete primary school and an equal proportion - 60 per cent - of both boys and girls would attend secondary school. The Bank was also the largest single source of external financing on reproductive health and population activities, primary health care and human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) prevention. It was also moving ahead with its $200 million micro-financed facility in order to make micro-finance available to many more women in the developing world.

26. With respect to participatory approaches, a preliminary review of fiscal year 1995 operations showed that 36 per cent of approved projects included influential forms of participation by directly affected stakeholders, i.e., those who would benefit or lose from bank-supported operations. The involvement of indirectly affected stakeholders, including non-governmental organizations, professional and technical bodies and other interest groups was also increasing.

In fiscal year 1995, 41 per cent of all projects approved by the Bank involved non-governmental organizations. The Bank also made more information publicly available and encouraged borrowing Governments to enter into partnerships with various elements of civil society in the interest of effectiveness and sustainability.

27. Mr. Wonil CHO (Republic of Korea) said that Governments should pay greater attention to the productive role of women in the economy and take the necessary administrative and institutional measures to enhance and promote their participation in the workforce and eliminate gender-based discrimination. Governments should also incorporate women's issues into national development plans and vigorously promote their participation in the formulation and implementation of such plans. To that end, investments should focus especially on the enhancement of women's access to education and vocational training.

28. The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) should play a significant role in the implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women. His delegation therefore endorsed the efforts by the United Nations Development Programme/United Nations Population Fund (UNDP/UNFPA) Executive Board to strengthen the work of UNIFEM.

29. With regard to human resources development, his delegation supported an integrated human resource development approach which fostered and sustained human resource development at the individual, group and institutional levels. Such an approach should be more responsive to the changing demands of human resources in each country. His country's economic experience had demonstrated that both investment and vigorous support for basic education and vocational training were essential to an effective promotion of human resource development. Particularly useful, in the light of the demand-oriented approach to human resources, were joint educational programmes in which industries and educational institutions collaborated in the education and training of industrial employees.

30. Calling on the international community to ensure the early implementation of the Declaration and Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development with respect to the eradication of poverty, he said that it was vital for the international community to focus its efforts on the development of rural areas, where poverty predominated. In that regard, he commended the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) for its contributions to identifying the causes of rural poverty and formulating effective solutions. His country's experience had demonstrated that grass-roots participation should be accommodated in any coordination efforts between the United Nations development agencies and government authorities of developing countries.

31. His delegation supported the enhanced coordination of UNDP and the Bretton Woods institutions in working towards the overarching goals of sustainable development, eradication of poverty, human resources management and the advancement of women.

32. Mr. AL-KHATIB (Syrian Arab Republic) said that sustainable development required a dynamic equilibrium between human resources and natural resources. In his country, women played an outstanding role, strengthening the development process through their participation in all productive sectors, side by side with

their fundamental social and political role, in which they had taken a leading position in the development of Syrian Arab society. Indeed, economic development in Syria had required human development for men and women alike.

33. Syria was among the front-ranking developing countries in terms of education for women. Illiteracy among women had dropped from 55.2 per cent in 1981 to 30.6 per cent in 1993, while university enrolment of women increased from 26 per cent of the total in 1980 to 39.8 per cent in 1993. Syria was making efforts to renew its legislation in the area of family law and to provide women with the qualifications that would guarantee them opportunities for advancement and participation in comprehensive development.

34. In Syria, unlike many countries, working women enjoyed equality of wages with men, for Syria believed that a lower wage for women not only meant economic decline but detracted from women's social position. Syria's economic pluralism had opened up possibilities for the participation of women in most economic activities, including industry. In many cases, that entailed developing legislation and restructuring resources to conform to new production processes and consumption patterns. Moreover, growing importance was being accorded to industrial health and safety and the availability of service facilities for women at the workplace.

35. Syria also devoted especial attention to the education and training of women participating indirectly in development, such as rural women and housewives. In respect of agricultural work, women enjoyed complete freedom, having access to financial and technical services as well as guidance and coordination services. They had equal rights with men for engaging in commerce, and their right to inherit land was protected by law. Women's participation in the area of work had also offered them opportunities for extensive participation in positions of authority and decision-making in all fields, political as well as social and economic.

36. His delegation stressed the need to combine national and international efforts to achieve the effective, fruitful participation of women in development, for Syria believed that reliance on women would enhance growth and help to alleviate poverty, the elimination of which was the fundamental objective of development.

37. Ms. LOE (Norway) endorsed the statement made by the representative of Spain speaking on behalf of the European Union with respect to women in development. Her delegation joined the Southern African Development Community in emphasizing the significant contribution of women to economic activity and the major force that they represented for change and development. Governments must create an enabling environment for women's economic participation through policy measures and legal instruments.

38. Governments must guarantee women's rights and afford them the opportunity to participate fully and on an equal footing in all spheres of life, not least in productive activities. In order to halt the alarming trend towards the feminization of poverty, women must be guaranteed full and equal access to economic resources and markets, particularly access to credit and the right to inheritance and to ownership of land.

39. There were few more effective ways for promoting sustainable social and economic development than to invest in education for women and girls. Economic policy formulation must take into account the gender perspective. Policy makers often underestimated women's real contribution to society and to the economy, since so much of their work was unremunerated and therefore invisible in national accounts. Governments must follow up the recommendation contained in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action to develop methods to measure and better understand the type, extent and distribution of unremunerated work. She hoped that the Committee would give more attention to women's issues in the future and that it would cooperate with the Third Committee on that matter.

40. Mr. SENČAR (Slovenia) said that in view of the increasingly integrated economic environment, which was characterized by capital market liberalization and additional players such as the newly independent States, an integrated approach should be adopted to development policy. Business development and entrepreneurship were closely connected with social justice and environmental issues. The aim, in short, was to make the world economy a vehicle for improving the living conditions of all peoples of the world.

41. Private initiative was becoming the main engine of development. Accordingly, Governments should establish strict monetary and fiscal policies and a firm, transparent legal framework. They should also play a crucial role in the redistribution of development benefits through budget allocation. The liberalization of capital markets notwithstanding, investment, particularly domestic saving, was crucial to economic development, and all developing countries and countries in transition must strive for an efficient organization of domestic resources.

42. In view of all the foregoing, Slovenia had opted for an integrated approach which allowed all its citizens to participate in the privatization process through the free ownership of certificates which represented 40 per cent of former socially owned enterprises. All citizens were thereby given the opportunity to participate in the establishment of a free market economy and in sharing in its benefits.

43. However, the development of private initiative and entrepreneurship should not overlook environmental issues. Noting that his Government and public opinion in Slovenia attached considerable importance to the environmental aspect of promoting entrepreneurship and privatization, he said that non-governmental organizations had recently prepared an Agenda 21 for Slovenia. The Government would include many of that document's conclusions in the national environmental strategy.

44. It was very important to elaborate integrated development policies. Accordingly, in recent years Slovenia had concluded several agreements with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development for co-financing projects aimed at modernizing its industries and making them environmentally sound.

45. Mr. DUGAN (United States of America) said that the driving force behind the discussion of business and development was the globally shared interest in ensuring the most effective and efficient stewardship of the world's resources. Since the private sector was the engine for sustainable economic, social and

infrastructure development, it was appropriate to support the creation and enhancement of enabling environments for business. Micro-enterprise lending and other entrepreneurial developments promoted the empowerment of individuals and small enterprises.

46. In the light of the vast scale of international business, it was imperative to combat corrupt business practices, including money laundering and other illicit activities. The first weapon against corruption in business was transparency of information and publicity. His delegation awaited with interest further information on the ongoing efforts of the Latin American countries to combat money laundering. It also welcomed the work of the 1994 World Ministerial Conference on Organized Transnational Crime and the fact that the number of countries acceding to the 1988 United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances was increasing.

47. It was very disturbing that, although virtually every country outlawed the bribery of its domestic public officials, most tolerated the bribery of foreign public officials by their own nationals and by third party nationals. Apart from the fairness and moral issues which illicit payments raised, such practices undermined government accountability and economic development, forced citizens of host countries to pay more than was necessary for major infrastructure projects and disrupted efforts to achieve a stable and predictable business environment and to promote fair economic and social development. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) had recommended that its members should take significant steps to combat commercial bribery. He urged the resumption of work on the draft international agreement on illicit payments; that work should take into account the efforts of other forums on relevant issues.

48. His delegation looked forward to working with others to prepare a draft resolution addressing entrepreneurship, privatization, the sustainable provision of infrastructure services for society and illicit business practices. With regard to entrepreneurship, the text should continue to direct the United Nations system to improve its activities (in particular, its operational activities for development, others of a technical assistance nature and its own internal procurement practices) in order to involve the private sector, to the greatest extent practicable, in its programming and to promote free markets. It should also promote principles of free enterprise, entrepreneurial development and the required economic, legal and financial enabling environments for private sector growth and should encourage small and medium-sized enterprises.

49. His delegation looked forward to resolution language on privatization that would continue to call upon the United Nations system to improve its activities, in particular those of a technical assistance nature, in support of national efforts to increase economic efficiency, growth and sustainable development through privatization, de-monopolization and administrative deregulation of economic activities. With regard to infrastructure services, the draft resolution should protect essential services for the poor and safeguard the environment and should also identify the need for price reform, more businesslike management, better targeted subsidies, increased private sector involvement in developing infrastructure and the improved utilization and maintenance of existing infrastructure.

50. With respect to illicit payments, the draft resolution on business and development should call for the completion of the draft international agreement on illicit payments by reconvening the Economic and Social Council committee responsible for that work and should request the committee to report to the Economic and Social Council at its regular session in 1996 on the progress achieved.

51. Lastly, he pointed out that the pace of privatization had accelerated markedly during the preceding decade and underscored the symbiotic link between privatization and the development of domestic and international capital markets.

52. Ms. FRASER (Canada) said that although her delegation endorsed the conclusions and recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Effective mobilization and integration of women in development: gender issues in macroeconomic policy-making and development planning", it believed that the report should have contained more information on the downstream effect of macroeconomic policies on women, in particular poor women, along with action-oriented recommendations. Her delegation welcomed the thoughtful statement made by the representative of Namibia at the preceding meeting on behalf of the Southern African Development Community.

53. The Fourth World Conference on Women and the 1995 Human Development Report had drawn attention to the importance of integrating women into the economic, social and political mainstream. Poverty was becoming increasingly feminized, and it was therefore imperative to support education for women and girls, including vocational education and training in technology. Women must also be given the opportunity to exercise greater political power. Rapid implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action was essential, and the United Nations had an important role to play in that process. She welcomed the Secretary-General's proposal to establish a high-level board on the advancement of women to advise him on the follow-up to the Conference and to establish an inter-agency task force on the empowerment and advancement of women. The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) would have an important role to play in that area. More remained to be done in terms of defining and implementing the United Nations contribution to the Beijing Platform for Action. It must be borne in mind that national Governments had the primary responsibility for the Platform's implementation and that the role of the United Nations was to provide appropriate support.

54. Mr. AGONA (Uganda) reiterated his delegation's disappointment with respect to the documentation on the item under discussion. He was particularly dissatisfied that document A/50/487 containing the report of the Secretary-General on the Programme for the Second Industrial Development Decade for Africa, had not yet been issued. He underscored the importance which his delegation attached to industrialization in Africa as a means to achieve economic growth and development and the continuing relevance of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization in the promotion of industrialization in Africa. The report, which had been requested in the relevant resolution adopted at the forty-ninth session, should have been before the Committee for its consideration of the item currently under discussion. Its absence had prevented his delegation from addressing some of the specific issues relating to the implementation of the Programme for the Decade.

55. He proposed that a specific entity should be designated as being responsible for reporting on the implementation of the Programme for the Decade.

56. The CHAIRMAN said that he had raised the matter on several occasions and that certain objective reasons had prevented the report from being issued on time.

The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.